

Questions on Cantor's Dilemma

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This is a written essay exercise, read book and answer all questions below.

Book: Cantor's Dilemma by Carl Djerassi.

- a) First, find out what a dilemma is and how it is different from a problem or a conflict. (Briefly). Then answer the question: according to you, what is Cantor's dilemma? Are there perhaps several? (I believe there are, students usually find about 3). Identify them and also, **in each case**, the **choices** Cantor has. (Structure this answer clearly!)
- b) In what way is the quote by Relman (on trust) at the very beginning of Cantor's Dilemma relevant to the book? Give also other, more general, examples of the role of trust in science (list).
- c) In your view, does the case involve a) fraud, b) the kind of error that can easily happen in hectic research, c) indefensible sloppiness, e) something else, what? Explain in detail your reasoning, refer to specific pages and passages to justify your judgment.
- d) Is there an event or episode which seems crucial in the case, to which one might be saying: "If only X had (hadn't) done Y, the whole thing could have been resolved"? Identify X and Y. Also, speculate about the reason(s) why X didn't do Y, the "obvious" thing to do.
- e) This is a novel. A good novel often has a hero and a villain. In your view, is there a hero and a villain in this book? If so, who is the "real" hero and who is the "real" villain? If there is no hero and villain, explain why.
- f) Who do you think put the anonymous note under Cantor's door? Why? Do you have any good grounds for your belief? Explain.
- g) Is this case believable as "docudrama," i.e. could something like this (or worse) really happen in the world of science. Is there something in particular that seems unbelievable in "real" scientific life, and why? Explain.
- h) How does this book relate to the different themes and readings in our course so far, including the films? Give specific exx. and say how these relate. (Can make list)